Adventure Education:
A Historical and Theoretical Perspective of Challenge Course Education
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Adventure education, adventure-based education, and challenge course education (a component of adventure-based education), are very recent educational phenomena when compared to the overall picture of modern education. They are methodologies, means to specific educational ends or purposes. I agree with Wurding’s (1994) claim that, “the purpose [of adventure education] is to help people learn more about themselves and the world they live in” (p. 26). This is an educational goal beyond the academic learning of traditional educational settings, what I consider to be social learning. Challenge course education provides room for social development and understanding. These ideas and ways of addressing them have been imbedded in a long history of educational thoughts and practices.

It is the purpose of this paper to delineate the historical and theoretical underpinnings of challenge course education. I will first explore the foundational premises of experiential education and experiential learning in order to ground challenge course practices into the overall picture of education. From this vantage point I will move into the specific aspects of adventure education and adventure-based education in order to clarify the origin and utility of the challenge course.

It is a common understanding that if we know where we have been, we are better able to know where we’re going. If challenge course practitioners (i.e., facilitators) are provided with historical and theoretical information about what they are a part of, they will be better prepared to participate in the goals and purposes of challenge course education. And, better able to add to and advance this type of social learning experience.

Experiential Education

A History of Experiential Education

Experience as a noun, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (2007), is “the fact of being consciously the subject of a state or condition, or being consciously affected by an event.” Experience as a verb is “to have experience of; to meet with; to feel, suffer, undergo.” Experience as education is commonly known today by the noun experiential education and by the action, or verb, as experiential learning. The use of the word “experience,” both noun and verb, and alternate forms of the word and meaning, have been used by educators throughout time in order to express the importance of how, we as humans, learn.

Aristotle

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.) recognized early on the importance of experience and experiencing. He broke from the traditional views of Plato’s educational idea that forms could only be realized and understood through dialect or through the mind. Aristotle taught the realization and understanding of forms by studying the material things themselves (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). In this way knowledge was obtained through the senses, through experiencing the forms. Aristotle, in Book II of his Nicomachean Ethics stated, “For the things we have to learn
before we can do them, we learn by doing them” (quoted in Reed & Johnson, 2000, p. 22). Realism, discovering how the world works by examining it, became a new way to know and understand the world – a progressive form of education at its time. Students, to the realist, are viewed as organisms that come in contact with reality through sensory experiences (Knight, 1998, p. 49).

**John Locke**

John Locke (1632-1704) was one particular educator responsible for bringing realism into the modern world. He was able to advance the notion that all knowledge came through experience. Locke is most widely known for developing the concept that the mind is a blank slate, a *tabula rasa*, imprinted with ideas through sensations and reflection. As Ozmon and Carver (2003) note:

Locke believed that as people have more experiences, they have more ideas imprinted on the mind and more with which to relate…The only way people can be sure their ideas are correct is by verifying them in experience. (p. 129)

Locke himself said, “[t]o accustom a child to have true notions of things…as I have said [sic] to accustom them [sic] to truth and sincerity, to a submission of reason and, as much as may be, to reflect on their own actions” (quoted from *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, John Locke, 1925, in Reed & Johnson, 2000, pp. 56-57). This reflection on actions, or experiences, is a significant component of the experiential learning cycle developed in the twentieth century.

**Jean-Jacques Rousseau**

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) also advocated for direct experience in educational pursuits. He is considered to be one of the major intellectual influences on modern progressive education – a philosophy that was reestablished in reaction to the overpowering hold of traditional information assimilation education in the late 1800s.

Rousseau is most remembered by his ideas of education portrayed through his fictional student Emile. In these ideas Rousseau established three sources of education: *nature*, that of the spontaneous development of a person’s physical body; *human beings*, the social contact one experiences; and *things*, the encounters of personal experiences from surrounding objects. His ideas of naturalistic education helped educators become more sympathetic to the developmental stages and natural tendencies of the child (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Rousseau would say about Emile (in a book by the same name, *Emile*, 1762):

Let us lay it down as an incontestable principle that the first impulses of nature are always right…the child should not do anything because he is seen or heard by other people, but only do what nature demands of him…[naturalistic] experience apart from anything else should take the place of law for him…If he knows nothing by heart, he knows a great deal by experience. (quoted in Reed & Johnson, 2000, pp. 67-68)

In other words, Rousseau believed that the experiences that came naturally to the child through creative endeavors such as, movement, exploration, and wonder should be nurtured, and not replaced by the “laws” or doctrine to be known “by heart”, typically disseminated in the schools of the time.
Johann Pestalozzi

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) was one of the many “experiential” educators influenced by Rousseau’s natural philosophy recommending that children be educated through the experiences of their senses. Pestalozzi wrote:

Nature, in her advance toward development, invariably follows the important law, that the degree of clearness of our knowledge depends on the greater or less distance of the objects which we perceive [sic]. Every thing in the surrounding world appears confused in proportion as it is distanced from us; whatever, on the contrary, is near, appears more distinct. As far as I am an inhabitant of this world, my five senses are myself; and therefore the clearness or obscurity of my ideas must depend on the distance from which each impression reaches these senses. (quoted in Krusi, 1875, p. 156)

Educating within this philosophy, Pestalozzi is credited for creating the “object lesson” approach to explore the students’ surroundings through their senses. An object in the lives of the students, for example a lamp, would be encountered, described, and explored through experiencing the object and then answering questions, posed by the educator, about the object (Noddings, 1998, p. 19). This question posing is another hallmark of the experiential learning process promoted in the twentieth century.

“Experience” into the Twentieth Century

By the late eighteen hundreds a resurgence of progressive ideas began to surface in the United States giving birth to a pragmatic philosophy of education – the idea that “mind and matter are not two separate and independent substances. People know about matter only as they experience it and reflect upon that experience with their minds” (Knight, 1998, p. 63). Locke posited this idea of reflection, a significant component of the experiential learning cycle yet to come, nearly two hundred years before the pragmatic philosophy became widely known.

Pragmatic Thinking

Charles Peirce (1839-1914) has been credited by many (Schubert, 1986; Knight, 1998; Noddings, 1998; Ozmon & Craver, 2003) as the person who initially influenced pragmatic thinking in the United States. His article, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear,” published in Popular Science Monthly in 1878, suggested that we give meaning to objects in our reality through the way we interact with the object. In Peirce’s words, “Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearing, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object” (quoted in Noddings, 1998, p. 25). In other words, Peirce emphasized that we give meaning to objects through our experiences with them and the consequences of the experience. For pragmatic thinkers, objects could have different meanings for different people depending on how each person experiences the object.

Pragmatic, or experiential ideas were advanced by William James (1842-1910), a contemporary of Peirce, who was in a better position to bring the philosophy of pragmatism to the public. James, influenced by Peirce’s practical consequences of experiences, promoted the idea of “radical empiricism” – meaning that truth cannot be separated from experience (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). In educational circles, James is most remembered through his ideas in Talks to
Teachers, published in 1899. James advised teachers not to preach too much (referring to traditional methods of education) and allow the student to take the first steps towards learning. He noted that action and feeling go together, and stressed that it is importance to teach what students care about, so their actions can lead to learning. James also noted that the students will pay more attention to what the teacher does than what the teacher says. This idea put an emphasis on the teacher as a role model, and some might claim planted the seeds of the educator as “facilitator,” and not just one who provides information. Experiential learning interactions between the students, teachers, and the objects they studied were the focus of James’ and other pragmatists’ work.

John Dewey

Without question, the most notable pragmatist was John Dewey (1859-1952). According to Pinar and his colleagues (2004), Dewey’s contribution to curricular and educational thought is “incalculable.” His belief in experiential learning permeated his contributions to philosophy and education through such works as The Child and the Curriculum (1902), How We Think (1910), Democracy and Education (1916), Experience and Nature (1925), Art as Experience (1934), and Experience and Education (1938). Dewey’s (1916) definition of education at the time of progressive thought, was the “reconstruction or reorganization of experiences which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases abilities to direct the course of subsequent experiences” (p. 76).

Like Peirce and James, Dewey believed that experience was the center of all learning and it was essential that the child take part in the direction of his or her learning experiences (no doubt influenced by the ideas of Rousseau, Pestalozzi and others). During his career as an educator and philosopher, Dewey emphasizes that education should be relevant to the students and be a way to advance the goals of a healthy society. The teacher’s duty was to create “educative” environments that would relate to and bring out the students interests. The teacher would then guide the student towards worthwhile or educative experiences – those experiences that would have meaning to the student. These educative experiences had both continuity and interaction. The continuity was how experiences connected to one another so that the learning from one would help to understand the next. The interaction of an experience was how closely the experience fits, or interacts, with the internal interest of the student. These two factors would lead to a continued interest in future experiences. This can be contrasted with a “mis-educative” experience which is any experience “that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of future experience” (Dewey, 1998/1938).

By the time Dewey published Experience and Education in 1938, he had well established himself as a leader in pragmatic thought and in the progressive education movement. His philosophy of education would become the cornerstone of experiential education theory, and from that moment on would overlap with the philosophical principles of adventure education. The historical aspects of experiential education and experiential learning will continue as they intertwine with the contemporary theoretical considerations we will now explore.
Experiential Education Theory

It is noted in one of the most recent publications on adventure education, that the most common learning theory applied to adventure and experiential education today is David Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (Panicucci, 2007). Kolb (1984) states:

Experiential learning theory…offers the foundation for an approach to education and learning as a lifelong process that is soundly based in intellectual traditions of social psychology, philosophy, and cognitive psychology. The experiential learning model pursues a framework for examining and strengthening the critical linkages among education, work, and personal development. (pp. 3-4)

Before looking at Kolb’s model, I want to explore the intellectual traditions he noted through the theoretical works of the people who influenced him, as well as some of the other educators who have contributed to the theoretical aspects of experiential education.

Figure 2.1: Dewey’s Learning Process (Beard & Wilson, 2002, p. 29)

John Dewey

We have already established John Dewey as being one of the most influential educational theorists of the twentieth century (Kolb, 1984; Beard & Wilson, 2002; Prouty et al., 2007). His support for the process of experiential learning is well documented. Beard and Wilson (2002) give Dewey credit for one of the first “learning processes” or cyclical learning models associated with experiential learning (Figure 2.1). Through Dewey’s work they determined that learning first begins with an observation, a cognitive awareness of something. The learner then gains some knowledge from this observation that is then given a judgment as to whether or not this knowledge will be used or discarded. As judgments are assimilated they become data in regards to considering future observations.

Dewey’s (1910/1991) notions of how we think, or learn, are actually a bit more involved. He distinguishes between mere “inconsequential trifling” or unconnected thoughts and the process of “reflective thought.” Reflective thoughts are connected so that one thought grows out
of another, each thought supporting one another. These thoughts take the learner beyond supposed knowledge and into “accepting or rejecting of something as reasonably probable or improbable” (p. 4). The way Dewey sees it, not all thinking leads to learning, just like not all observations will lead to knowledge and judgment in order to better understand another observation.

To take Dewey’s ideas one step further, he goes on to explain that thinking involves conscious reflection on a problem, or some new information. First the learner stops to focus on a problem at hand. Second, a diagnosis of the true nature of the problem is considered. The third step is the consideration of the possible solutions to the problem followed by a fourth step of considering the probable consequences if each solution were carried out. In the fifth, and final stage of the cycle, the most realistic solution is put to action, and the consequences are considered. If the solution is acceptable, knowledge is gained about the problem and can be used in future similar “salutations” or experiences. If the solution fails, the learner goes back, to at least step four in order to find another solution to the problem; or, in the case of encountering new information, another way to generalize it with existing knowledge.

As Miettinen (2000) would point out some ninety years later, Dewey considered “non-reflective” experiences based on our habits as the dominant form of experience and our only “reason for reflection was the necessity of solving problems faced in habitual ways of action” (p. 61). To say this in another way, facing or experiencing “problems” that take us out of our everyday habits is the precursor to learning. This cycle of reflective thought would inevitably be a critical component of experiential learning theory.

As noted earlier, by the late 1930s, Dewey (1939) would solidify his idea of educative experiences having both continuity (experiences being connected together through reflective thought) and interaction (how experiences connect internally with the learner). Educative experiences at times developed and presented by an instructor and at other times simply encountered by the learner, lead the learner out of habit and into “problems” to consider. The learner gains knowledge and skill from one experience, which “becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations that follow. The process goes on as long as life and learning continues” (Dewey, 1998/1938, p. 42). With the promotion of pragmatic thought and Dewey’s continued emphasis on experience as education in the first half of the twentieth century, other notable figures began to contribute theoretical support to the growing body of knowledge on experiential learning.

**Kurt Lewin and Colleagues**

In the 1940s and 50s Kurt Lewin and his colleagues began exploring the use of action research and T-groups as a way to educate or “re-educate” and improve the working relations of particular groups of people. The premise behind action research was simply to base individual or group “action” on carefully collected and analyzed data. Lewin (1997/1948), using a group example, describes the action research process as first planning to meet some group objective. In other words, what does the group decide to do in order to meet a particular objective “in light of the means available” (p. 145)? Once an overall plan is reached and the initial first step of action is determined, the group goes about executing, or taking action, on the plan. Once the plan has run its course, a “reconnaissance” or fact finding step is conducted in order to 1) evaluate action, 2) give the group a chance to learn, and 3) provide information for “correctly” planning for the next objective (p. 146). This action research process is summed up well by Schein and Bennis (1965). “Whenever possible, valid data are used to influence action, and action, itself, creates still more data for evaluation” (p. 29).
Over time, Lewin and his colleagues became known for their work-group relational studies that specifically focused on training new individual and group behaviors. They established the “in-group” – a group formed in such a way so that its members would feel “belongingness” (Lewin, 1997/1948, p. 55). The principle of in-grouping Lewin said, makes [it] understandable why complete acceptance of previously rejected facts can be achieved best through discovery of these facts by the group members themselves. Then, and frequently only then, do the facts become really their facts (as against other people’s facts). An individual will believe facts he himself had discovered in the same way that he believes in himself or in his group. (author emphasis, p. 55)

In-group training turned the learning over to the group and its members. Formally, the action research process was considered “laboratory training” with individuals formed into training groups or what became known as T-groups. Laboratory training of this kind, according to Shein and Bennis (1965) was “distinguished by its emphasis on the socially relevant aspects of behavior and stress[ed] connections between the delegate [participant] and those reference groups which [were] most important to him” (p. 30).

In 1960 Blake (found in Shein & Bennis, 1965), described this laboratory method of training as a “dilemma-invention-feedback-generalization” model (as you will see, derived from Lewin’s model). First the delegates [T-group participants] were faced with a dilemma that was created by the trainer or by the trainer and participants together. This dilemma was meant to simulate a specific problem the participants all agree to work on. The participants would then work together to solve the dilemma through experimentation and invention of new ideas – discovering solutions for themselves. After this participants engaged in a feedback process in order to evaluate their own actions and the actions of others. Finally, the participants and the trainer(s) would then generalize what was learned about their group process in order to theorize and hypothesize their knowledge into the next learning phase (i.e., dilemma).

To reiterate, the emphasis and the change in thought about Lewin’s group development process was that the group “discovered” the answers to their problems for themselves – the answers were not given to them by someone else. This experiential discovery process turned out to be the underlying foundation of Kolb’s experiential learning cycle.

Before we look at Kolb however, it will be prudent to consider a reference he made (Kolb, 1971) to a learning process shared by Matthew Miles that had an influence on the “so-called experiential learning model” he referred to as “a far more useful approach to the learning process” (p. 1) – foreshadowing his own model to come in the near future. It will also be important to consider the “experiential learning process” promoted by James Coleman that was moving through traditional education circles during the time Kolb was developing his ideas [my emphasis].

Matthew Miles

As a social psychologist, Miles (1959) focused on the processes for learning and helping others learn effective group behavior. An educational training group Miles said, was different from other educative settings because group members dealt with feelings, not just facts, in the here-and-now. The attention of a training group is paid to “what is happening between people, right now, as a means to learning” (p. 36). The here-and-now is the major source of content. This group focus was different from a classroom group (for example) whose here-and-
now experience is related to a body of content. Or, as Miles (1981) would say later, the “there and then” and “where and when” (p. 40).

The learning process model proposed by Miles (Figure 2.2), used with training groups, depicts a series of steps group members go through during group training as a way to learn new behavioral skills. After going through step A1 through step E1, the learner returns to step A2, then B2 and so on. This learning process is repeated over time.

Like Lewin and his colleagues, Miles promoted the idea of social learning during training programs. Miles (1981) notes, a “training group is a group set up to help a wide range of ‘normal’ people grow and make constructive change in their social selves by analyzing their here-and-now experiences in the group, aided by the trainer” (p. 42).

Before moving on, I’d like to point out that Miles makes no reference to John Dewey’s work even though his learning process model appears to be closely related to the way Dewey described how we think. You can also find Dewey’s popular word “educative” throughout Miles’ text. I’m not sure how common the word is, but it was popularized during Dewey’s tenure. Making this point, we can now see in the experiential learning literature during the second half of the twentieth century that ideas, models, and theories begin to blend together without much credit to their origin. Experiential learning, it appears, was becoming mainstream.

Figure 2.2: Steps in the Learning Process (Miles, 1959 p. 38)
James Coleman

In the 1970s James Coleman and others (e.g., Houle, 1977; Keeton & Tate, 1978) continued the support for experiential learning through traditional education circles. As early as 1973 Coleman (1977) promoted a “theory of instruction” he called the experiential learning process. He would say that this process was almost the reverse of the information assimilation process commonly used in traditional education settings. This model, according to Coleman, has four steps:

1. One carries out an action in a particular instance and sees the effects of that action.
2. One gains understanding of the effects in a particular instance, so that if exactly the same set of circumstances reappeared, one could anticipate what would follow from the action.
3. One works to understand the general principle under which the particular instance fell – the ability to see a connection between the actions and effects over a range of circumstances.
4. One applies the new general principle through action in a new circumstance within the range of generalization – at this level the person can be said to have completed the learning so that the experience he has undergone is useful to him in future actions. (1977, pp. 51-52)

Coleman’s use of the word “action” is reminiscent of Lewin’s action research work. There is also a connection to Dewey in that the experience undergone is useful in future actions – there is a “connection” from action to action. Coleman also brings in the process of understanding outcomes of one’s actions as fitting into general principles, and then into how these principles fit into a “range of generalizations.” This idea of generalizing will be seen as a main feature in Kolb’s model (Coleman makes no reference to Kolb and vice versa).

Even though Coleman is somewhat vague about its application, he is promoting this experiential learning model within traditional educational settings as a way to teach academic subjects – even though he does say that the process is more difficult and time-consuming. And, he only makes one reference to two personal benefits realized through the experiential process. He claims that the successes found through learning in this way “strengthen self-esteem and a sense of personal mastery” (p. 60). There is no indication, as with Lewin and Miles, that this process can be used as a way to enhance social behaviors.

David Kolb

David Kolb’s interest in social psychology, social change, and executive professional education, in the late 1960s and into the 1980s, led him to develop an experiential learning theory that ultimately would support his well-known “Learning Style Inventory” (Kolb, 1984). In one of his first papers (Kolb, 1971) he labeled this learning theory, “The Experiential Learning Model” and represented it in a circular figure, calling it, “My version of the model” (p. 2) (Figure 2.3).
Kolb claimed that “[t]he core of this model is a simple description of the learning cycle, of how experience is translated into concepts which in turn are used as guides in the choice of new experiences” (pp. 1-2). He noted that the model was primarily developed from the work of Schein and Bennis (1965) and gained acceptance through the work of Miles (1959). The figure and terminology Kolb included in his version of the model would remain unchanged throughout his career. However, it took on different names over time.

In a book of exercises (Kolb, Rubin, & McIntyre, 1971) published the same year as the paper noted above, the authors called Kolb’s cyclical figure “A Model of the Learning/Problem-Solving Process” and claimed, as indicated by the label, that the model was a combination of the characteristics of both the learning and problem solving processes. They go on to say that this learning cycle continuously reoccurs in “human beings” and that “the direction learning takes is governed by one’s felt needs and goals” (p. 28). No references to or further explanation of the model are provided.

Kolb published his most notable work in 1984, Experiential Learning: Experience as The Source of Learning and Development. In this work, his original experiential learning model figure is named “The Lewinian Experiential Learning Model.” The model contains the same four stages, in the same configuration as the 1971 model, however, the label has changed. A rational for this change might be found in the first section of Kolb’s (1984) text, where he does a very thorough job of giving credit to the contributors of his learning theory, most notably John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget for his theory that describes how intelligence is shaped by experience.

Due to this interesting chronicle of events, and a number of other factors, a recent argument regarding Kolb’s 1984 publication was delivered by Miettinen (2000). He proposes:

One cannot help concluding that Kolb’s motive is not critical evaluation or interdisciplinary but an attempt to construct an ‘attractive’ collection of ideas that can be advocated as a solution to the social problems of our time and to substantiate the usefulness of his learning style inventory. (p. 56)
In other words, Miettinen views Kolb’s book as a “marketing promotion.”

Whether Kolb’s *Experiential Learning Model* is simply a marketing promotion or not, the adventure education community has supported the use of what is now commonly referred to as the “experiential learning cycle” credited to Kolb (see, Nadler & Luckner, 1992; Wurdinger & Priest, 1999; Panicucci, 2007). The four stages of Kolb’s model (Figure 2.3) are important to examine because of their direct connection to challenge course education.

Even though Dewey, Lewin, and Kolb all concur that learning can start in different stages within a learning process or model, the most common point of departure is from a *concrete experience*. In adventure education, these experiences are most often presented by a group leader or facilitator. The experience for Dewey could be labeled a problem, for Lewin an action. In any case, it is the experience that provides an opportunity for learning.

Upon completion of, or even during, an experience, *observations and reflections* are made to discuss what has occurred or is occurring in regards to the experience. For Lewin, this was the time when the group members participated in a feedback session to determine what was and what wasn’t working. This reflection phase is an opportunity to replay the experience in order to recognize information that is used in the next step, *formation of abstract concepts and generalizations*.

By making generalizations and forming abstract, unclear concepts, the group is taking information from the experience and projecting it into future experiences. For example, if the group determined that taking time to hear everyone’s ideas in the last activity was important to their success, the generalization for them would be “let’s make sure we set aside time for everyone to share ideas.” Using other important information, the group develops additional abstract concepts and generalizations to take with them into the next phase of the cycle.

*Testing implications of concepts in new situations* occurs along with another concrete experience, or as Lewin would put it, the next action. The group makes the effort to apply their generalizations and concepts to another experience. At the same time, the group is also undergoing other possible opportunities to learn from the “concrete” experience. In turn, the learning cycle continues to repeat itself as long as the process is consciously engaged. For Dewey, if we return to our habits, breaking the learning cycle, the possibilities to learn are negligible.

When it comes to adventure education, specifically challenge course education, participants are guided through this “learning cycle” process by their facilitator. The facilitator accepts the task of providing educative experiences for groups to learn from, in order to meet the social development goals and objectives they set up for their program. Kolb’s Lewinian model provides a theoretically supported and structured process for the facilitator to follow.

*Reflection*

Kraft and Sakofs (1988) provide a contemporary definition for experiential education that portrays the philosophy of the practice:

> Experiential education is the process of actively engaging students in an authentic experience that will have benefits and consequences. Students make discoveries and experiment with knowledge themselves instead of hearing or reading about the experiences of others. Students also reflect on their experiences, thus developing new skills, new attitudes, and new theories or ways of thinking. (p. 4)
It is easy to see the historical and theoretical influences of experiential education within this definition. From this perspective it is time to explore how this definition fits with the historical and theoretical aspects of adventure education, and how this definition is the foundation of adventure-based education and more specifically, challenge course education practices.

Adventure Education

With a specific reference and connection to Kolb’s “experiential learning cycle,” Joseph Bailey (1999) contributed a definition of adventure education stating that it involves, 1) a particular set of activities, often set in the outdoors, 2) it uses kinesthetic learning through active physical experience, 3) it involves structured learning experiences that create the opportunity for growth, and 4) it includes a conscious reflection on the experience with intended application to future experiences.

Since Bailey’s contribution, the theoretical principles of adventure education have apparently become even more difficult to separate from those of experiential education. This notion is articulated best by Prouty (2007). He tells us:

Adventures education can be defined as direct, active, and engaging learning experiences that involve the whole person and have real consequences. Experiential education has a similar definition, comprising a broader umbrella that encompasses learning methods that occur in less active modes such as the classroom. The definitions of experiential education and adventure education are merging and becoming less distinguishable because the element that makes experiential education an adventure is not just how active or physically risky the activity is, but what the learner’s overall state of mind is. If learners are out of their comfort zone and are actively engaged in learning, then we are increasingly likely to describe that as good adventure education. (p. 4)

Bisson (1996) actually shares an image of an umbrella labeled “experiential education” with the ribs of the umbrella representing a number of aspects of outdoor education, including among them, adventure education. “How did adventure education come to be so enmeshed with experiential education?” and “What theoretical ideas bracket the adventure education process?” are the questions to be explored in this section.

A History of Adventure Education

It would be a formidable research task to trace the origins of adventure pursuits. When did the first adventure take place? When did the first group of people venture out together to engage in a “daring undertaking”? As adventure became noticed as a pursuit, it has been defined as an undertaking which involves some level of risk (actual or perceived) with relatively unknown outcomes or consequences (Miles & Priest, 1999; Priest & Gass, 2005).

In the United States

Recreational adventure gained notoriety in the United States during the 1800s through the establishment of the first residential summer camps and outdoor programs offered through the newly formed YMCA. Also, as pristine areas of the country become set aside as state parks, more and more people ventured to the out of doors as their from of recreation (Raiola & O’Keefe, 1999).
Camping Education

Into the 1900s the literature on adventurous pursuits included the term \textit{camping education} coined by Lloyd Burgess Sharp who would become known as the “father of public school camping” (Bunting, 2006, p. 20). This was a new focus for certain educational endeavors, using outdoor environments and adventure as educational tools. The curricular aspects of camping education included learning about the natural environment, as well as the basic skills of cooking, setting camp, and hiking. Another important aspect was simply that the outdoor environment provided “healthful” outdoor living in the sunshine and fresh air (Hammerman, Hammerman & Hammerman, 1964). By the 1960s the term camping education transitioned to outdoor education (Bisson, 1996) based on the diversity of outdoor activities (beyond camping) that were emerging (e.g., mountain climbing, rock climbing, canoeing, skiing).

Outdoor Education

Under the category of outdoor education, new terms were established such as environmental education, wilderness education, adventure education, and challenge education. All these educational practices fell under the umbrella of experiential education noted earlier by Bisson (1996). (For a detailed look at the semantics of adventure programming, see Priest, 1999.)

As the terms became defined, experiences, specifically in adventure education, involved a symbolic medium (e.g., adventure pursuit) that provided a lesson in the moment and were not disconnected from the “doing” of what is being learned. From the perspective of experiential education, learning comes from direct experience with an object or situation rather than from reading or hearing about something, and possibly experiencing it in the future.

In relation to the overall picture of outdoor education, adventure recreation and adventure education are two experiential practices that are most often confused as synonymous. Bailey (1999) notes that the “emphasis of the former [is] on the enjoyment and satisfaction derived from an activity, while in the latter the social and personal learning is the key value” (p. 39). It is now possible to look at how adventure education developed its own boundaries.

Overseas: Kurt Hahn and Outward Bound

Kurt Hahn

The origin of adventure education is traced back to the work of Kurt Hahn (Raiola & O’Keefe, 1999). Hahn was a German educator in the mid 1900s, dedicated to creating “healthy environments in which young people could learn habits of life that would protect them against….deteriorating values of modern life” (James, 2000, p. 37). He was greatly influenced by Plato’s \textit{Republic} and the quest for regenerating society through education, as well as by the progressive and wholesome educational ideas of his contemporary German educators Hermann Lietz and Cecil Reddie. Hahn was also influenced by the pragmatist William James and his idea that it is possible to create, in peace time, the social spirit that is generated in times of war (James, 2000). To accomplish his goals, Hahn believed, like Rousseau, a separation from the existing human world was needed. This idea, along with the opportunity to confront meaningful challenges and to be of service to others, would allow young people, Hahn advanced, to be more willing to bring a better society into being (James, 1990). His Salem school in Germany, in the
nineteen twenties, was part of a country castle away from modern conveniences, well suited for his progressive ideas.

Hahn’s voice and efforts to create a better moral community were met with disfavor in Hitler’s Germany. After a short imprisonment, he immigrated to England in 1933 starting another institution, Gordonstoun in Scotland. Under Hahn’s leadership, Gordonstoun was a school that balanced the cognitive and physical aspects of instruction. Students were assessed, among other things, on their sense of justice and imagination, their ability to state facts precisely, and even their manners. In the Dewian spirit, Hahn balanced traditional forms of education with progressive ideas. He penned his educational methods as “The Seven Laws of Salem” (named at his Salem school in Germany in the 1920s). These laws include the opportunity for self-discovery and meeting with experiences of triumph and defeat. Hahn felt that overcoming a defeatist attitude would help young people face the challenges of life with more courage. The laws also provided for the opportunity to serve the community and to train the imagination so the young can better visualize, plan, and hope for a desirable future. Another one of Hahn’s laws was to make games important but not predominant. This meant less emphasis on competitive play and more emphasis on fairness and cooperation (James, 2000). Again, Hahn’s emphasis on the students’ social development, by way of experience, was just as important as their cognitive development, by way of the classroom.

**Outward Bound**

Hahn believed, as did his contemporary progressivists in America, that experience was essential to learning and to fulfilling his educational methods. With this emphasis in mind it was in nearby Wales, in 1941 where Hahn, James Hogan, and Lawrence Holt developed a residential “short course” (soon after to be named Outward Bound) for sailors and other apprentices of industry to experientially learn how to survive the dangers of the sea (Richards, n.d.). Holt’s distinction – training *through* rather than training *for* – was always to be the essence of the short course’s dynamic. It didn’t take long for Hahn and his colleagues to bring sea and wilderness short courses (expeditions) to the students at their school as another means to meet their educational objectives. Life-enhancing experience, as Hahn would be known to say, is obtained through the sea, the mountains, the wild lake country, and the desert (Miner, 1999).

**Outward Bound in the United States**

Joshua Miner, an American educator, had the opportunity to teach with Hahn at Gordonstoun in 1951. When Miner left in 1952 he resolved to bring, in some aspect, Hahn’s philosophy of education to the United States. With dedicated effort and the help of Charles Froelicher, the Colorado Outward Bound School was established in 1962. In Hahn’s spirit, this school provided dramatic challenges and victories for people of all ages that were not available through conventional forms of schooling (Sakofs & Armstrong, 1996). The Colorado Outward Bound School was not an academic institution. It was an alternative program that provided education through adventure outside of the school walls. Though somewhat vague at first, the schools’ goals and how they were to be accomplished were eventually identified to demonstrate their educational credibility. Outward Bound’s key objective was: “To broaden enthusiasm for and understanding of self, others and the environment. To enhance interpersonal communication and cooperation” (Kalisch, 1979, p. 16). The Outward Bound motto was, and still is: “To serve, to strive and not to yield” (p. 10). The success of the school and its programs led to other
mountain and sea Outward Bound schools across several continents in the decades to come (Miner & Bolt, 2002/1981).

From the respected roots and the growth of Outward Bound, adventure education became a powerful learning methodology. Predictably, adventure education provides a context in which to learn about our natural environments. Adventure education is “also concerned,” says Priest (1999) “with two relationships… interpersonally and intrapersonally. Interpersonal relationships refer to how people get along in a group… Intrapersonal relationships refer to how an individual gets along with self” (p. 111). With this in mind, it is time to consider the theoretical aspects of adventure education.

Theoretical Aspects of Adventure Education

Experiential Learning Theory

The early Outward Bound courses were yet to be called adventure education, this label would come later. Hahn referred to these courses, and what took place during them, as “experience therapy” (Rohr, 1966). Specifically speaking of the Outward Bound aspect of Hahn’s educational conceptions, true experiential education, as we have come to know it here, was the theory behind the practice. Hahn’s purpose and educational philosophy, he would always claim, was to help students learn to make intelligent judgments and develop “the inherent strengths of selfhood” (Miner, 2000, p. 14).

Initially, working with seaman from Holt’s shipping company, the sailors would be put into experiences that mirrored what they might encounter in the open sea. Through this practice the sailors, in theory, would be better able to survive real life situations. It didn’t take long for Hahn, and others, to realize the power of these natural experiences. Soon the “expedition” became part of Hahn’s training devices specifically aimed at a number of his Seven Laws of Salem, most notably, giving the students an opportunity for self-discovery; giving them a chance to meet with triumph and defeat (to overcome “defeatism”), and; giving the opportunity to experience self-effacement in a common cause (Sakofs & Armstrong, 1996). Hahn (1960) would also give credit to the expedition as contributing to one of his most valued educational goals, “building strength of character.” At the time there was no empirical proof to Hahn’s claims, but in time there would be (see Hattie, Marsh, Neill & Richards, 1997). “What started out as a wartime school for survival” Green and Thompson (1990) would say, “has evolved into an action-oriented program for personal growth, service to others, and physical preparedness” (pp. 5-6)

Since Hahn’s idea of experience therapy, there was a pressing need in later years to theoretically, and at times philosophically, support the use of adventure education. Philosophically, Hunt (1990) promotes that adventure education is an avenue that “impels” students into thought. Considering the context and purpose of adventure, thoughts most often led to, as noted earlier, interpersonal and intrapersonal relations. This philosophical idea leads directly into a number of theoretical points of view that have been connected to adventure education over time.
Social Psychological Theories

A number of social psychological theories have been attributed to adventure education (Miles, & Priest, 1999; Bunting, 2006; Ewert & Garvey, 2007). These theories pertain to the psychological factors and social actions and interactions of individuals and groups. Three of the most common theories considered in relation to adventure education are self-efficacy, attribution, and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, defined by Albert Bandura (1986), is an individual’s perception of ability or the belief in his or her ability to accomplish a specific task. Adventure education practices provide a wide range of tasks for individuals to work on that, as we know, involve some level of risk and unknown outcome. Bunting (2006) notes that a person’s efficacy can be affected by four basic processes: 1) Experiences of success – adventure educators have the opportunity to plan experiences for participants that will lead to success; 2) Verbal persuasion – adventure experiences provide the opportunity for feedback which includes encouragement and support; 3) Vicarious experience – participants have the opportunity to identify with others’ positive accomplishments (which can lead to their own), and; 4) Emotional arousal – adventure experiences elicit emotions that can lead to success as well as lead to learning opportunities. Adventure education is not the only field that can contribute to the positive self-efficacy of an individual, but it is a powerful one.

Attribution Theory & Locus of Control

Attribution theory is credited to Fritz Heider (1958). This theory basically looks to what an individual or group “attributes” to their success - is success related to internal or external factors? Strong internal attributions can be developed and encouraged through adventure education. Martin (1999) claims that “[a] stable controllable internal self-attribution of success from [adventure] involvement leads to the positive, eustress loop described by Priest (1993)” (p. 173). Through the thoughtful planning and facilitation of the adventure leader, individuals and groups can gain the understanding that they hold the key to their success and, as the experiential learning cycle implies, apply this knowledge to other aspects of their life. In more common terms, a stronger internal “locus of control” is maintained.

The theory of locus of control runs parallel to attribution theory. It was situated within a framework of Rotter’s (1954; see also 1990) social learning theory of personality. In this light, it is easier to locate empirical research that connects adventure education pursuits to the development of internal locus of control (see, Stremba, 1977; Huie, 1983; Richards, van Gelder, & Neill, 1994).

Hierarchy of Needs, Self-Esteem and Self-Concept

Maslow’s (1970) theory of an individuals “hierarchy of needs” also plays strongly into adventure education pursuits (Bunting, 2006). Each level of Maslow’s famous pyramid of needs can be developed through adventure. The physiological needs are addressed through the planning and preparation of a wilderness expedition (as an example). The safety needs are addressed through skills training and the group development process that precedes the trip. The belonging need is developed through the trust that grows within the group as they work together before and
during the adventure. With a foundation of these three steps, and the accomplishments the individuals achieve through this group work, a greater level of esteem (the fourth need), or self-concept can be reached. It can also be argued (Kiewa, 1999), that Maslow’s idea of self-actualization can be achieved through wilderness (adventure) programs.

It is here in Maslow’s hierarchy where you will find some of the most compelling adventure education research – in the area of self-esteem, or self-concept. In Hatti et al. (1997) there are more than a dozen studies related to self-esteem, self-concept and other related attributes. It is through these and other studies that one is able to see how adventure education affects the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal growth. It is building that strength of character in order to be a better person in the world, as Hahn would say. In one of his most cited quotes Sakofs (Sakofs et al., 1996), says, “I regard it as the foremost task of education to ensure survival of these qualities; an enterprising curiosity; an undefeatable spirit; tenacity in pursuit; readiness for sensible self-denial and above all, compassion; (p. 3). Adventure education leads to such qualities.

Ewert and Garvey (2007) extend our exploration and note that the outcomes of adventure education include, moral development, personal growth, group development, and leadership development. An offshoot of adventure education, adventure-based education, shares in these outcomes and the theoretical perspectives. The difference, we will discover, is found in the environmental contexts and activities.

Reflection

Even though the category of adventure education was not adopted until later, its form started out in the United States as camping education and in Europe as experience therapy. It has grown into a powerful social educational tool. Throughout the twentieth century, adventure education practices have been utilized in personal, group, and family counseling, business training, a variety of service professions, as well as traditional, private, and residential educational settings. Its purpose has been, and continues to be, a means through which individuals and groups can grow and learn about themselves and others in an exciting and challenging context.

Adventure-Based Education

A History of Adventure-Based Education

Project Adventure

Outward Bound programs and its philosophy spread across the country in the 1960s and early 1970s. It was then, during the academic school year of 1970-71 that a former Outward Bound educator, Jerome “Jerry” Pieh, was hired as the principal of a Massachusetts high school. Along with the help of Gary Baker, Pieh was able to secure a grant to provide a program, called Project Adventure, to mainstream the Outward Bound philosophy into his secondary public school setting (Lentz, Smith, Sentkowski and Seidman, 1976). This Project Adventure program, as it was named, was the genesis for what Bisson (1996) calls challenge education, commonly known today as adventure-based education – an educational methodology “based” on the philosophical and theoretical principles of adventure education.

The significant difference between adventure education and adventure-based education is the context in which the adventures take place. Adventure-based education moves the dynamics
of adventurous (wilderness) pursuits into more predictable environments (e.g., classrooms, gymnasiums, athletic fields, and challenge courses), away from the unpredictability of nature. Prouty (2007) gives us a more contemporary distinction between the two, presenting adventure-based education as “facilities-based” adventure education and the historical understanding of adventure education as “wilderness-based” adventure education (Prouty, 2007). For the purpose of this paper, I choose to stay with the more historical labels.

Hiring the help of key staff, some with Outward Bound backgrounds, Pieh’s goal was to bring the objectives of the Outward Bound experience into the tenth grade physical education program and academics subjects such as English, History, Science, Theatre Arts, and Counseling (Prouty, 2007). Some of the adventure-based objectives gleaned from Outward Bound included personal development – the opportunity to extend self awareness and help to recognize one’s role in the community; Interpersonal effectiveness – the opportunity to encourage open communications with others and construct cooperative relationships; Learning – the opportunity to participate in an environment and an attitude based on experimentation and experiential learning; and Philosophy and values – the opportunity to test and refine personal values and perspectives (Kalisch, 1979). These ideas incorporated a unique social element of education into the traditional academic environment through adventure education objectives.

This early transition is described by Karl Rohnke (personal communication, December 16, 2007):

There were four of us on staff, so the four of us were developing curriculum most of the time because it was new stuff…in the very beginning [first year] we tried to follow a plan that had been made up which involved trying to transfer what occurred during a 26 day residential experience at Outward Bound, and try to fit it into a 50 minute block period of time, something that was not well received by the students. In survival mode, and with nothing to lose…we shifted into creative gear and began trying new approaches and activities. It worked…

From this creative beginning, Rohnke became the most prolific writer of adventure-based activity books in the field. These cooperative teambuilding activities were utilized in adventure-based education programs like the expedition was used in adventure education. Rohnke (1977) promoted the use of these activities in order to:

1) Increase the participant’s level of confidence;
2) Increase mutual support within a group;
3) Develop an increased level of agility and physical coordination;
4) Develop an increased joy in one’s physical self and in being with others;
5) Develop an increased familiarity and identification with the natural world.

(pp. 7-8)

These activities and objectives helped to move the spirit, philosophy, and outcomes of Outward Bound into the non-wilderness setting.

**Challenge Course Education**

A challenge course consists of constructed activities or “elements” aesthetically designed and built in the outdoors with ropes, cables, and wood using trees or poles as stable anchors to the ground. Challenge courses can also be found indoors with beams and walls as the supporting
structures. These elements are built in such a way as to “stimulate challenges that might be found in a natural setting…involving mental, physical, and emotional risk taking” (Rohnke, Rogers, Wall, & Tait, 2007, p. 3).

For example, two of the most common elements found on challenge courses today are the Spider’s Web and the Pamper Pole. The Spider’s Web is a low element that actually looks like a giant spider’s web with holes large enough to fit a person through each one. The group is challenged to pass it’s members through the holes of the web without touching the “silk” threads – they do not want to wake up the spider! This activity promotes *inter*personal reflection on social relation issues of planning, trust, physical and emotional support, and aspects of success and failure. The Pamper Pole is an individual high element. A participant, wearing a harness and tied into a belay system, is challenged to climb a pole and stand on the top. The height of some of these poles can reach up to 70 feet. Once on the top of the pole the next challenge is to jump off towards a small bell hanging somewhere in front of them – touching the bell is an added challenge. Attempting this activity can lead to *intrapersonal* issues of facing one’s fears and trusting in one’s self as well as the system they are tied into. Each element or activity presented on a challenge course provides an opportunity for social learning experiences.

The challenge course was developed as a tool, used as a means to an end. Initially this tool was called an obstacle course developed by George Herbert, a French naval training officer (Rohnke, 1999; Wagstaff, n.d.) around the turn of the twentieth century. Opposed to traditional ways of training, Herbert “developed obstacle courses in natural areas that required the use of fundamental movements such as jumping, climbing, running, walking, crawling, balancing, throwing, lifting and carrying” (Wagstaff, n.d.). Herbert’s view on education in general, according to Cousineau (1976) “was a return-to-nature approach with emphasis on development of ‘moral values and virile character’” (p. 3). Put in different words with the same meaning, not far from the purposes of using the challenge course today.

The Outward Bound school at Aberdovey Wales, established in 1941, is considered to be the first site of, what was then to be called, a ropes course or challenge course (Wagstaff, n.d.). It was yet another tool in Hahn’s educational scheme for his instructors to help their students build confidence in themselves and trust in others. When the Outward Bound schools reached the United States in 1961, the ropes course was a standard feature in every program. At the site of the first course in Colorado, Miner and Bolt (2002/1981), share:

> Central to the basic training were a set of initiative tests and the aerial ropes course. The primary purpose of the initiatives was to build group cohesion and espirit. They included the wall and beam, two tests that have become virtually standard elements in the Outward Bound curriculum. The wall in particular is a highly effective means of taking a collection of individuals, strangers to each other, and transforming them into an instant group. (pp. 105-106)

Knowing the power of the ropes course through his Outward Bound training, it was not long before Rohnke built a course for the Project Adventure program. “The one thing we knew was transferable” says Rohnke, “other than the proven Outward Bound concepts, was the challenge ropes course” (Rohnke, 1999, p. 348). In turn, the challenge course would become an important aspect of adventure-based education.

The Project Adventure staff would ultimately train enthusiastic educators in adventure-based methods and challenge course procedures from, not only their own school, but also the surrounding schools as well. And, just like the success and the expansion of Outward Bound
schools, so too did adventure-based education in public schools catch on and expand. The Project Adventure entity separated from the Massachusetts public school in 1981, keeping the original name as a private non-profit organization dedicated to helping develop adventure education in school settings across the United States and around the world (Prouty, 2007).

Utilization of Adventure-Based Education

Since the formal implementation of adventure-based practices, starting with Project Adventure in the field of education, a number of other fields have followed suit, most notably counseling and business. Adventure-based counseling (Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliff, 1988) involves the ideas, practices, and theories of adventure-based education with group counseling within schools and other youth and adult organizations.

Organizational (business) training and development or experience-based training and development (EBTD) (Miner, 1999), takes adventure-based education into the corporate world. EBTDD has been defined as “a process which uses challenge, adventure, or risk (perceived or actual, physical or psychological) combined with participant processing, usually in an outdoor or wild setting, to improve employees’ workplace performance” (p. 396). Adventure-based education, its practice and theories, is used in fields interested in improving personal and interpersonal relationships in order to affect other areas of individuals’ or group of individuals’ lives.

Theoretical Aspects of Adventure-Based Education

Table 2.1
Theories Related to Adventure and Adventure-Based Education (Ewert & Garvey, 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Proponents</th>
<th>Salient Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Learning</td>
<td>J. Rotter, A. Bandura</td>
<td>Interaction between individuals and their environment is key</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal-Driven Behavior</td>
<td>V. H Vroom, M. Csikszentmihalyi</td>
<td>Actual of expected goals serve to guide action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functionalism</td>
<td>W. James</td>
<td>Behavior is adaptive; focuses on causes of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Dissonance</td>
<td>L. Festinger</td>
<td>Focuses on situations when an individual if faced with competing thoughts and beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimal Arousal</td>
<td>J. Hunt, M. Ellis</td>
<td>Factors such as novelty, variety, and change are important variables in psychological health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overlapping Theories

The theoretical perspectives of adventure-based education are grounded in both experiential and adventure education theories. In comparison, adventure-based educators use the experiential learning cycle to work through the learning of program activities. Program objectives and outcomes are often centered on aspects of participants’ and the groups’ self-efficacy, locus of control and hierarchy of needs. Ewert and Garvey (2007) also provide a
number of other theories that can be seen integrated into adventure-based education programs (Table 2.1).

Out of this table of related theories and the theories shared with adventure education, social learning theory has a more particular fit with adventure-based education. Even though adventure education experiences include a social learning component, it can often take a back seat to the adventure at hand. For adventure-based programs, the social aspect of the activities is one of the major focuses of programming. The social learning opportunities available through adventure-based education are expectedly found through the social interaction of the group members.

Social learning theory was developed through the work of Julian Rotter (1954) and advanced by Albert Bandura (1977). Rotter posited that avoiding negative consequences and seeking more positive consequences motivate human behavior. Once a person experiences a positive outcome from a behavior, this person is prone to continue this behavior. If the behavior is supported by social contact, the behavior is even more likely to continue. Bandura supported and expanded Rotter’s ideas by pointing out that people’s environments caused them to behave in certain ways – acting on their psychological needs. Social learning then, according to Bandura included four factors, 1) an attention to one’s environment, 2) a retention of what was observed, 3) reproduction of desired behaviors, and 4) motivation to continue the desired behaviors.

These factors of the social learning theory fit with the objectives of adventure-based activities and ultimately mesh nicely into the experiential learning cycle utilized extensively in adventure-based programs. The attention to one’s environment is consciously being a part of a concrete experience. The retention of what is observed is enhanced through the observation and reflection of the cycle. The formation of generalizations lead to a committed effort to reproduce desired behaviors. And, the motivation to continue desired behaviors is of course testing them in new situations. Social learning theory can be seen as a dominant aspect of adventure-based education.

Practitioners involved in adventure-based education also come to realize that any of these psychosocial theories we have discussed can be found within the theoretical practices outlined in Teaching Through Adventure (Lentz et al., 1976). From the adventure and adventure-based education perspective, real learning takes place in a context of adventure (consider Prouty’s take on experiential education and adventure education noted earlier); learning is cooperative (or social); students need to understand the connection between their adventure and the world outside the adventure (transfer of learning promoted in the experiential learning cycle), and; “education should give students an opportunity to bring together and to integrate the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and even the aesthetic aspects of the personality” (p. 9) (consider the theories discussed in relation to both adventure and adventure-based education).

Adventures-Based Education Curriculum

More specifically, when looking at the objectives of the adventure-based curricula the focus is, just like adventure education, on the use of adventurous activities to encourage personal and social growth. Specific curricular activities include cooperative games, stunts, trust activities, initiative problems and challenge course elements, both low to the ground and high above the ground, taking place in either outdoor or indoor settings.

The curricular theory of adventure-based education, and adventure education as well, that scaffold the educational and psychosocial theories discussed thus far, is described by Nadler and Luckner (1997) – still as prevalent today as it was in the early 1990s. The components of this theory include:
1. **The Student** – attending the course with some expectation of a meaningful learning experience. Some anticipation causes a sense of an internal situation referred to as…

2. **Disequilibrium** – an individual’s awareness that a mismatch exists between old ways of thinking and new information, an important link to learning. This disequilibrium takes place in a…

3. **Novel Setting** – an environment out of the ordinary for the individual that enhances the opportunity to break down individual and group barriers contributing to heightened levels of arousal leading to underlying conditions of effort, trust, constructive levels of anxiety and risk integrated within a…

4. **Cooperative Environment** – an atmosphere of education that emphasizes cooperative versus competitive learning that fosters the development of group cohesiveness, and allows time for interpersonal and intrapersonal communication while engaged in…

5. **Unique Problem-Solving Situations** – an involvement with new skills and problem solving opportunities introduced to participants in a sequence of increasing difficulty solved when group members draw on their mental, emotional and physical resources. Completion of these tasks leads to…

6. **Feelings of Accomplishment** – which lead to increased self-esteem, an increase of locus of control, improved communication skills and more effective problem-solving skills. The meaningfulness of these accomplishments is augmented by…

7. **Processing the Experiences** – which is a time set aside for feedback and reflection on activities and interactions of the group allowing participants to express thoughts and feelings that they are experiencing. This process is essential if there is going to be…

8. **Generalization and Transfer** – the ultimate goal of the adventure-based [and adventure] experience. Participants are encouraged to discover ongoing linkages, bridges, and connections to what they are learning so that they can integrate their personal and group insights and desired behaviors into their lifestyle during the remainder of their program and when they return home. (Nadler & Luckner, 1997, pp. 7-8)

These theoretical components of adventure programs, taking place either on a challenge course or in the wilderness, cover the curricular components of both adventure and adventure-based educational offerings. The context and activities of the adventure are the main factors that separate the two methodologies.

**Reflection**

Adventure Education, Adventure-based education, and more specifically to this paper, challenge course education, are methodologies (and contexts) for interpersonal and intrapersonal development. They are means to advancing social education. Even though a challenge course is not needed to implement an adventure-based program (Bunting, 2006), it has become a popular and enticing way to bring groups together in order to learn and grow.
References


